



Antibiotics Are Not Always the Answer

For more information:

Talk to your health care provider

Visit our website

www.doh.wa.gov/topics/antibiotics.htm

Read

Breaking the Antibiotic Habit: A Parent's Guide to Coughs, Colds, Ear Infections, and Sore Throats

by Paul Offit, MD, Bonnie Fass-Offit, MD,
and Louis Bell, MD (John Wiley & Sons,
1999; ISBN: 0-471-31982-1)



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Control and Prevention, and American Society for Microbiology.

Antibiotics

Are not always the answer

- ◆ Antibiotics are used for bacterial infections.
- ◆ When your child is sick with a cough, sore throat or cold she probably has a viral infection.
- ◆ Common viral infections such as cough, sore throat or colds cannot be cured by taking antibiotics.
- ◆ When your child recovers from a common viral infection it is because she fights the illness on her own.
- ◆ Use of antibiotics when they are not needed can harm your child.
- ◆ Handwashing is the single best way to prevent the spread of illness.

Ask your provider.



Commonly asked questions

What can I do to protect my child?

Use antibiotics only when your health care provider has determined that they might be effective. Antibiotics will not cure most colds, coughs, sore throats, or runny noses—children fight off colds on their own.

If mucus from the nose changes from clear to yellow or green, does this mean that my child needs antibiotics?

Yellow or green mucus does not mean that your child has a bacterial infection. It is normal for the mucus to get thick and change color during a viral cold.

Does this mean I should never give my child antibiotics?

Antibiotics are very powerful medicines, and should be used to treat bacterial infections. If an antibiotic is prescribed, make sure you give your child the entire course and never save antibiotics for later use.

How do I know if my child has a viral or bacterial infection?

Ask your health care provider. If you think that your child might need treatment, you should contact your provider. But remember, colds are caused by viruses, and should not be treated with antibiotics.



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